

**Virginia Comprehensive Assistance Network [VA CAN] Meeting
February 13, 2007
Meeting Notes**

Attendance:

Keith Boisvert—Office of Pollution Prevention, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Bev Donati and Jennifer Wester—Dept. of Labor and Industry
Mike Eisenman—Virginia Commonwealth University
Linda Hawkins—Internal Revenue Service
Jim McKean—Dept. of Business Assistance
Rodney Sobin—Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP), DEQ

Roundtable

Keith Boisvert noted that the Environment Virginia (<http://www.environmentva.org>) conference will take place on April 10-12 at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, VA. This year's conference has a land use management theme. The Environment Virginia conference series was discussed. Mike Eisenman later noted that the conference, with its presence of engineering company representatives, could serve as an outreach opportunity for the new VCU engineering and business career center effort that he is directing. DEQ will have a booth representing multiple offices and programs.

Jennifer Wester spoke about the annual Occupational Health and Safety conference, which will take place on June 6-8 at the Hotel Roanoke. There will be a special focus on fatality prevention and there will be pre-conference 10-hour training sessions for construction and general industry. Conference participation can count for continuing education credits. DoLI's web site has a flyer on the conference and additional details will soon be published. See http://www.doli.state.va.us/infocenter/vosh_conference/06_conference.pdf

Mike Eisenman discussed his new position at VCU, which is to develop and manage an engineering and business career center. The center will not duplicate the general university career center that provides traditional career counseling (e.g., resume, interview skills) and recruiting events. Rather the engineering and business career center will promote interactions and collaboration between engineering and business students and the business community. The center will foster greater interactions between and opportunities for students and companies. Mike would like to present more on this to the VACAN group as the initiative progresses, perhaps at a VCU venue.

Bev Donati described some of the activities of the Division of Registered Apprenticeships. The apprenticeship program has gone beyond the traditional blue collar trades to include such fields as health care and geospatial technicians. There are over 13,000 enrollees in about 400 program areas and about 2200 sponsors. Sponsors include companies as well as other organizations, such as labor unions. Apprenticeship programs are approved by the federal Department of Labor, are coordinated or managed through community colleges, and provide a valuable, recognized credential. Bev also noted that on March 15th the Virginia Apprenticeship Council will meet.

Linda Hawkins first noted that there have been adjustments to IRS forms necessitated by congressional action last December that occurred after forms were printed. E-filing will provide the most up-to-date forms. People using the hardcopy and pdf forms and instructions should look online for the latest instructions, such as provisions for tuition and energy investment tax credits, among others. One new thing is the telephone tax credit that is, in essence, a rebate of federal telephone taxes. Individuals can take a standard credit ranging from \$30 to \$60 depending on the number of exemptions or they can calculate their credit based on actual past telephone bills. Businesses must use a particular form to receive this credit. Linda also noted a study based on 2001 filings documenting a “tax gap” (i.e., underpayment as compared to what is really owed) of \$345 billion for that year.

Much of Linda’s discussion focused on her office’s outreach efforts. SBA found that most businesses last under four years and that tax issues are among the factors affecting business success. Her office would like to hold a small business forum, a bit like a VACAN session, but with outreach to industry and business associations. Linda would like help on identifying pertinent groups. Also there is the question of how to approach small businesses that are not a part of any business or industry group. Indeed, unaffiliated businesses may be the ones most in need of outreach. Her office is partnering with both the Asian-American and Hispanic chambers of commerce or business associations. The IRS 10-lesson CD for small businesses was mentioned.

Rod Sobin spoke about several activities of the DEQ Small Business Assistance Program. These included distribution of the gas station and dry cleaner calendars as compliance and recordkeeping tools; the Northern Virginia auto body shop voluntary self-certification program and recent delivery of certificates to qualifying shops; planned workshops for dry cleaners to explain new environmental regulations, to occur in April and May; and intentions to create a regulatory primer for biodiesel producers in collaboration with Virginia Clean Cities.

Jim McKean noted that his department wants to be identified specifically as the Virginia Department of Business Assistance. While noting different divisions in the department, Jim’s focus was on Business Information Services (BIS, formerly the existing business services program in the department). This part of DBA is emphasizing state procurement opportunities, particularly for small, woman-owned, and minority (SWAM) businesses. The division of labor among state departments is that the Department of General Services administers the eVA procurement system, the Department of Minority Business Enterprise provides SWAM certification, and DBA helps with outreach and education to help companies benefit as much as possible from participating in the electronic procurement program and SWAM initiative in Virginia.. DBA has had events around the state involving different state agencies and state universities, representing their respective procurement responsibilities. In addition, BIS at DBA has been active in Southwest Virginia, holding workshops with the Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Cooperative Extension Service that consist of four to six presentations over three hours in a cooperative effort with allied organizations such as local economic development offices, chambers of commerce, the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and local

SCORE chapters. DBA is looking to expand this workshop program into Southern (aka Southside) Virginia as well. There was discussion of tools that might be useful for such workshops, such as the EntrePlan CD and Workbook (Stu Neal mentioned) and a workbook developed by Longwood University for its affiliated SBDCs.

Jim distributed the “2007 Guide to Doing Business in Virginia” that appeared as special supplement in Virginia Business and was produced by DBA, Virginia SBDCs, and Virginia Business.

Jim also distributed HB 3164 that proposes a one-stop Business Permitting Center under DBA for small business permitting. Some participants were unaware of the proposal, which could be pertinent to their agencies. There were some concerns about DBA resources required and the ability of such a center to coordinate diverse agencies with complex permitting programs and diverse types of small businesses

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Next Meeting

Tuesday, April 17, 2007 at 10:00 am DEQ Piedmont Regional Office.